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Sermon on Mark 1, 4.

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The text of the brief sermon which I am going to preach is taken from the Gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 1, verse 4: "John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." A figure of startling, heroic mold steps before us here: John the Baptist, the advent preacher of the ages, the last one of that illustrious line of prophets whose mission it was to prepare the world for the coming of Christ, the Redeemer. The text states that he baptized, and that he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. In other words, John administered a baptism and proclaimed that it conferred a great blessing: the forgiveness of sins; but he insisted at the same time that it was a baptism of repentance, that is, it was intended for such only as repented of their sins. This great truth, then, stood out boldly in his preaching and formed its keynote, as it were: Without repentance no remission of sins.

1.

It is essential that we understand what John meant when he spoke of repentance. If we turn to the New Testament in the original language, the Greek, we find that the word translated "repentance" in our English Bible signifies change of mind, change of heart. John, then, has reference not to an outward, but to an inward act, an act hidden from human eyes and subject to the scrutiny of no one except yourself and your God. We are inclined to associate certain outward performances or attitudes with repentance, a meek and humble bearing, eyes filled with tears, words of bitter remorse and of deep sorrow. Let us not scorn or belittle such outward manifestations. The Savior speaks in words of praise of the publican who stood afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But the question is: Does the putting on of sack-

cloth, the strewing of ashes on our head, the weeping of bitter tears, constitute repentance? Plainly not. Repentance is a change of mind, it is something inward. There is a young man who has caused his mother much pain and anguish, and finally his reckless career sends her to an early grave. As he stands before the coffin and casts one more look upon those features, which always were so expressive of love toward him, the tears stream freely over his face, and as you observe him, you say: Now, finally, he has repented. Oh! be not too sure. That very night or the next day may find him with his boon companions in the same career of wickedness which he followed before. Those tears are something outward and do not necessarily indicate that he is a penitent man.

Change of heart, that implies, for one thing, that we see our wrong-doing in its true light as a transgression of God's holy will, as something utterly execrable and damnable. When we sin, we make some form of wrong-doing our plaything, our pet, our darling, which we fondle and caress. Think of a man who is given to filthy, unclean speech. He knows it is a wrong he is committing when he tells his unsavory stories, but he finds a certain pleasure in it, his companions compliment him, and so he continues to cultivate this sin. What would have to be the first thing in the change of heart which this man needs? This, that he realizes fully that with his wicked, unclean speech he has been offending against the majesty on high, and that, while he has been enjoying himself and entertaining others, he has been condemning his soul. That precisely was the first thing John insisted on when he preached a change of heart to the multitudes which flocked to hear him. The discourses reported of him in the Scriptures show that he reminded his hearers of their sins and of the punishment they were bringing upon themselves.

Change of heart, that implies, furthermore, that we believe the sweet Gospel-message, which tells us that Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins, and that God, for the sake of Jesus, His dear Son, is forgiving us our wrong-doing. John did not fail to incorporate this truth in his message, for we hear him say, pointing to Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And again he says: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." When we apprehend the full truth as to the situation into which our transgressions have placed us, when the thunders of the divine Law with its curses roll over our heads, damning us for having indulged in impure things, for having shut mercy and kindness out of our hearts, for having neglected opportunities to do good, what shall we do? End our lives in despair as Judas did and thus let eternal night, the second death, fold its dread shadows about us? Or shall we say: Condemned we are, now let us sin merrily till the day of execution and thus make life yield at least a small measure of enjoy-

ment to us? Or shall we say, in the pride of our natural strength, full of confidence in our own abilities: I shall wipe out my evil-doing through my own efforts and turn the scales of justice by demonstrating to God and man how good and upright and pure a person I can be? Is it thus that we shall speak? Friends, that would not reflect the change of heart, the change of mind, which John's message insists on. It would indicate that we have some conception of sin, but likewise, that we are unwilling to turn to the only remedy, the forgiveness earned for us by the sacrifice of Christ.

The prodigal son spoken of in the beautiful parable of the Savior underwent that very change of heart which I have been dwelling on. When he was in the depths of misery, he saw that his course had been both wicked and ruinous, and he felt sorry that he had yielded to the temptation to lead a life of unbridled lust and licentiousness. But likewise, when the question rose, What is to be done? and the thought of the love and kindness of his father suggested itself, he did not spurn that thought, but believed that his father would receive him back into the family circle if he were but willing to return. Here we have a picture of a sinner in whom true repentance is found—a realization of the depth of his guilt and a joyous faith in the Gospel of redeeming love.

2.

And now let us observe that John says: Without repentance there is no remission of sins. Why does God proclaim this to us through His messenger? Ah, let us not imagine that He wishes to exact a price from us for that great boon, His divine pardon. On Golgotha's hill a cross has been erected. There hangs the Son of God in agony—gory, dying. That is where the price was paid. And let us not malign the loving heart of our heavenly Father by saying that after He gave His only Son to be a ransom for us, He is still insisting on a price. Again, let us not imagine that He is not anxious to forgive. Think of the father of whom Jesus tells us in the parable alluded to before. His eyes had been scanning the roads leading to the old homestead to see whether the lost son would not soon be returning. And when the son was yet a great way off, he ran to meet him. The heart of God is yearning to restore the sinners to the position which they forfeited—that of children in His home. Why, then, does He say, "Repent"? Ah, His forgiveness will not be accepted by us unless we repent. That is the reason. It is the one and only way in which we can be made recipients of His pardon: repentance, change of mind, change of heart. You may have a friend who is afflicted with a dread malady without knowing it. Your urgent advice that he call or consult a physician will not be heeded by him unless he becomes aware of his not being well. There

has to be a change in his conviction as to his own condition. And furthermore, your suggestion that he call a certain physician in whom you have confidence will be of no avail if your friend feels a strong aversion toward this physician and totally mistrusts his abilities. There must be one more change of mind before your friend will call the physician you recommend. Oh, sinner, as long as you say, All is well with me, I am righteous, you will not care for the forgiveness offered you by your God. You must come to see the leprous spots which disfigure your soul. And again, as long as you do not trust in the sacrifice of Christ, you will, in spite of all anguish of heart, not accept the forgiveness so mercifully offered you by our God for the sake of the work of His Son. Thus it is everlastingly true: Without repentance there is no forgiveness. But it is likewise everlastingly true that for all who repent there is pardon and peace and life. May God grant to all of us true repentance, the repentance which John preached!

A.

Sermon Thoughts on Acts 17, 16—34.*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS. — After the preacher has selected his text, he should prayerfully and carefully read and study the text, the context, and the original Greek or Hebrew, look up parallel texts, and then meditate (which means to do some hard thinking) on what he has found. (Says Hoyt: "The surest way to have rich and abundant suggestions for sermons is to be a systematic student of the Scriptures.") Not until then should the preacher use a commentary or helps. What he finds in the commentaries or helps he should mentally digest and assimilate in order that he may then reproduce not the words, but the *thoughts in his own words*. The preacher should make his *own sketch* and *write* his sermon. Using such a method of sermonizing, the preacher will get much out of the text, will be able to present it clearly, as well as to memorize his sermon easily (for the right kind of memorizing consists in good, clear thinking), and will not recite his sermon in the pulpit, but in a conversational tone tell the divine message.

CONTEXT. — Paul was on his second missionary journey. Acts 15, 36—18, 22. At Thessalonica he preached in the synagog. Not a few believed, 17, 14, but the unbelieving Jews forsook him, v. 5. The brethren, therefore, sent Paul and Silas away to Berea, v. 10, where many searched the Scriptures daily and believed, vv. 11. 12. Hearing of Paul's work at Berea, some of the unbelieving Jews followed Paul and stirred up the people at Berea. V. 13. The brethren, therefore, brought Paul to *Athens*. Vv. 14. 15.

Subject of Acts 17, 16—34: Paul at Athens. (The subject is not

* A conference has requested that we print more *Predigtstudien*. The brethren believe that this would be not only helpful to the preacher, but also profitable for the congregation.

the theme; the subject is general, the theme is particular. The theme is the proposition, the definite statement, which clearly expresses *the main idea of the text and the one particular idea of the sermon.*)

EXEGETIC AND HOMILETIC MATERIAL. — (The basis of homiletics is sound exegesis. — We shall not reprint the Bible-text; it should, however, be read before the following notes are studied.)

V. 16. While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy at Athens, he observed that the city was wholly given to idolatry. Athens, about five miles from the sea, was a center of enlightenment in science, literature, and art; Corinth was the political center. Schools of philosophy at Athens: Platonic, Peripatetic, Epicurean, and Stoic. These schools attracted students from Greece and Rome. At Paul's time Athens was still subject to the Romans. Athens at that time numbered about ten thousand houses; they were plain, common buildings, for the Athenians spent their money, not on homes, but on magnificent public buildings. (Such facts as here given will help to a better understanding of the situation. When these facts are used in a sermon, care should be taken lest they be given such prominence that the *real lesson of the text* will be pushed into the background.)

V. 17. Paul was at once aware of the great need of preaching the Gospel at Athens. He did not wait (as the greatness of the task and fear might have persuaded him to do) for his colaborers to come, but at once went to work. He first went to the Jews and the devout persons (proselytes, converts to Judaism) in the synagog. The Jews had received the oracles of God and therefore would more readily than others understand what Paul meant when he spoke to them of the Messiah. In our mission-work we look up stray Lutherans or similar material first and from among them gather a nucleus for our work. Matt. 12, 9; 13, 54; Luke 4, 16; John 18, 20; Acts 13, 14; 14, 1; 18, 4. 26. — Paul, however, did not limit his activities to the Jews, nor did he delay in going to others; he daily went to the public market. Acts 10, 34—43; 18, 6; 28, 24—28; 13, 46. 47. — With all these people Paul "disputed," *dielegeto*, reasoned, discussed; Paul talked with them. John 4, 5 f.; Matt. 5, 1. 2; Luke 5, 3; Acts 28, 30. 31; 4, 20; Mark 16, 15.

V. 18. The sect of the Epicureans, founded by Epicurus, 341 to 270 B. C., was one of the leading philosophical sects of Greece and Rome. This sect taught that pleasure should be pursued and pain avoided. It corresponded to that of the Sadducees. Cf. Luke 12, 19. — The Stoics, founded by Zeno, born 357 (?) B. C., were essentially pantheists. They taught resignation to fate; feelings should be held in rigid control, so as to be, as much as possible, independent of all disturbing influences. The Stoics corresponded to the Pharisees. — Such Epicureans and Stoics, although not bearing the same name, we still have with us. Pleasure and self-righteous pride are still the

bitter enemies of Christianity. — Paul was face to face with the most enlightened men of his time. Some of these called him a “babbler,” *spermologos*, one who picks up trifles as birds pick up seed; in other words, an empty, worthless fellow, a mere idle talker. Matt. 11, 25. Others accused Paul of preaching new and strange gods, because he preached Jesus to them. He preached to them the true God, who revealed Himself in Christ. This, of course, was strange doctrine to the Athenians, as it is to every man still in his natural condition. The fact that Paul preached Jesus should be emphasized. Unless we preach Jesus, we are not true to our calling, nor can the world be saved without Him. 1 Cor. 1, 23, 24; 2, 2; Acts 4, 12; Gal. 1, 6—12.

Vv. 19, 20. The wise men of Athens did not drive Paul out of their city, as the unbelieving Jews had done at Thessalonica and at Berea; they granted him a hearing. The Areopagus, literally, Hill of Ares (Mars, the god of war), was the place where the highest court of Athens met. Before an informal gathering of philosophers, and perhaps also others, Paul gave the reason of the hope that was within him. 1 Pet. 3, 15. To the Athenians these things sounded strange and new. All the philosophical and religious systems of men, both of ancient and of modern times, have failed to supply the *real need* of men; this can be supplied only by that which God has revealed to us in His Word. 1 Cor. 2, 6—10. When natural man hears the revealed wisdom of God, it seems to him utter foolishness. 1 Cor. 2, 14. But it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching (not by the preaching of foolishness) to save them that believe. 1 Cor. 1, 21.

V. 21. The very latest news, *kainoteron*, the Athenians desired to tell or hear. That is human nature! And man is easily persuaded to accept as true the most absurd and unreasonable things; and again, just as quickly, changes his mind. All the crowd needs is a leader; then it follows.

V. 22. Mars Hill, the same as Areopagus. V. 19. Paul now delivers a masterly sermon. He had been called a “babbler,” but even from the viewpoint of human wisdom he proved himself to be the equal of the proud philosophers of Athens. In good, logical order he gave a clear, pointed, frank, direct, fearless, comprehensive presentation of the truth. He also quotes from a heathen poet. V. 28. “The foolishness of God” and the wisdom of this world, Christianity and heathen philosophy, truth and falsehood: these were opposed to each other at Athens. The outline of Paul’s sermon at Athens was as follows: The address: “Ye men of Athens!” V. 22a. Introduction: The altar with the inscription, “To the Unknown God.” Vv. 22b, 23a. The theme: *I Declare unto You the True God*, who 1) created the world, vv. 24, 25, 2) preserves the world and directs all things, vv. 26—29, 3) saves the world from sin through Christ, vv. 30, 31.

Paul begins with a polite, winning address, "Ye men of Athens!" He admits that the Athenians are very religious, *deisidaimonesterous*, better than "too superstitious." Even the people of our time are very religious: religious books are published galore, magazines and papers carry many religious articles and stories, city and country have many churches and temples; but as at Athens, so even to-day, in spite of their religiousness, the religion of many people is not Christian.

V. 23. As Paul beheld the *objects* of worship or devotion, *ta sebasmata*, he found an altar dedicated "To the Unknown God." Why should Paul longer look for a topic on which to speak? It was given by the circumstances. The Athenians had no greater need than to learn who their "unknown god" is, namely, the true God, and what His will is toward men. The Jews knew that the true God is Jehovah, but they did not honor and worship Him. When, therefore, Paul preached to the Jews, he did not begin by speaking to them of the true God, but by telling them that Jesus is the Messiah. When he preached to the Gentiles, he began with the very first things of the true religion. We notice how Paul establishes a *point of contact* with his hearers.

V. 24. "God made the world and all things therein." Whence is this world? This question the philosophers tried to answer; but while man by nature knows there is a God, Rom. 1, 19, 20, he, in the blindness of his heart, does not know who this God is. The true God, who created the world and who is the Lord of all, says Paul, cannot dwell in temples made with hands. Acts 7, 48—50; 2 Chron. 6, 18; Is. 66, 1. Even man's reason, if he uses it, tells him that the gods of the heathen are idols. The heathen themselves admitted that there is a God whom they knew not. In spite of their complicated philosophical systems and their boast of learning, the wise Athenians were still a few thousand years behind the times and had not yet learned the First Article of the Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." Heb. 11, 6. Even so to-day there are men, not only in heathen, but also in so-called Christian countries, to whom the true God is yet the unknown God. Also the modern theologians know not who the true God is, for by their so-called immanence theory they are making God a part of the world (pantheism), supposing God to be the energy which develops the world through a natural process of evolution.

V. 25. The apostle continues his argument. The true God does not need man, for God Himself is the very Giver of life and breath and all things; the fact, moreover, is that man needs God. Ps. 50, 10—12; Is. 40, 12—17.

V. 26. Paul had in the previous verses taught the Athenians the Scriptural *theology*, the doctrine concerning God; now he teaches them the Scriptural *anthropology*, the doctrine concerning man. As God is One, so the whole human race is one family, created by one God. All nations were made of one blood and should worship that one God. What a shock such a revelation must have been to the proud Greeks, who believed that they were the only *real* men and proudly spoke of others as barbarians and looked down upon their slaves as mere chattels, who had no claims of human rights or privileges! And why should there be any national gods, when, after all, one God had created all men? It is to this one God, and to none other, that all men owe homage. And (this thought is, no doubt, implied, though not expressed) as there is, in the final analysis, only one human family, the sin of the first man has consequently been inherited by all. That the human family is scattered over the face of the earth, with the result that it has been divided into many nations, is not mere chance, but divine intention, Gen. 11, 8, and the destinies of the nations or of the entire human family are in the hands of the one true God. Paul emphasizes not only the fact of God in nature, but also the fact of God in history.

V. 27. In this verse Paul states the divine purpose of the facts just presented. God manifests Himself in the creation of the world, in man's conscience, and in history, in order that man may have no excuse for worshiping idols, Rom. 1, 19—23. 32; 2, 1—11, but should seek after the true God. However, in the blindness of his natural heart, man does not find Him. The fact, nevertheless, remains that God is "not far from every one of us."

V. 28. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." This is not pantheism, which teaches that God and the world are identical. Paul does not say that the world is God, but that we are in God, and that our very life and movement and existence are determined by Him. Without God neither we nor the world could exist. God is both the Creator and the Preserver of the entire creation. If God would withdraw His divine power from the world, the world would again be reduced to nothingness. With God so near at hand, man need not go far to find Him.

Vv. 28b. 29. The Athenians' own philosophers condemned their idolatry, for one of their own poets, Aratus of Tarsus, 270 B. C., had said that man is the offspring of God. Cf. Luke 3, 38; Gen. 1, 26. But if man is the offspring of God, then the idols which are made by man and are inferior to man cannot truly be God or represent the Godhead. Ps. 115, 3—8; 135, 15—18. Worshiping idols does not show even good, sound reasoning. Even so it is true that such false teachings as that of evolution, Christian Science, etc., cannot stand in the light of good common sense and human judgment.

V. 30. The past times of great ignorance on the part of the heathen God in His mercy “winked at,” *hyperidon*, overlooked, took no notice of; that is, God did not hurl His wrath down upon the heathen, for He is a long-suffering, patient, and merciful God. Acts 14, 15—17; Rom. 3, 25. But *now*, since Christ, the Savior, has come into the world, God “commandeth,” charges, notifies, *paraggellei*, all men everywhere to repent unto life. Titus 1, 11—14; 1 Tim. 2, 4; Is. 1, 18; Ezek. 18, 31. 32.

V. 31. Judgment will come. This world and its wickedness will not continue forever. Nor can God forever “wink at” the ignorance of men. Men are now doubly without excuse; for God not only revealed Himself to them as their Creator, but also as their loving and forgiving God in Christ, the Savior. God will judge the world in righteousness; no injustice will be done to any one. 2 Cor. 5, 10. The Judge whom God has appointed is himself a man. This man, however, cannot be an ordinary man, a sinner; for how could he then *judge* all sinners? The man whom God ordained to be the Judge is the Son of God, who became man by assuming our nature, yet without sin. It is He of whom the angels said: “Unto you is *born* this day a Savior, which is Christ the *Lord*.” It is He by faith in whom all men should now be saved. John 3, 16; Luke 2, 11; 1 Cor. 1, 23. 24. To show that God acknowledged and accepted the Savior’s work and has given Him authority to be the Judge of all men, God raised Him from the dead. Acts 10, 39—42.

Some have asked, Was there not very little Gospel in Paul’s sermon at Athens? A closer study of the text will reveal the fact that there was much Gospel in it. It should not be overlooked that Paul had already, prior to his address on Mars Hill, preached daily in the market, the public concourse at Athens. V. 17. What did he preach? We read: “He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.” V. 18. In preaching Jesus, Paul, we are sure, did not neglect fully to present God’s plan of salvation. John 1, 29; 3, 16—21; Is. 53, 46; 2 Cor. 5, 14. 15; John 5, 27—29; Luke 10, 11; 2 Pet. 2, 1; Acts 3, 22. 23. In the public market Paul had already been encountered by the Epicureans and the Stoics. V. 18. They called him a “babbler” and a “setter forth of strange gods.” We may, therefore, assume that Paul had already prepared his audience for his discourse on Mars Hill. When he then spoke to them of *repentance* and of the Judge whom God had raised from the dead, they knew what he meant. It is also likely that the divine record gives us but a brief *résumé* of Paul’s sermon.

V. 32. Some openly professed their unbelief. Acts 2, 13. Others, like Felix, put off making sure of their salvation to a more convenient time. Acts 24, 25. We have the same experience to-day.

V. 33. Paul gave the wise men of Athens much to think about. He did not remain to argue with them. He had spoken to them the truth of God. Error is always best refuted by simply stating the truth. God's Word is a powerful Word; whom God's Word cannot convert we surely cannot.

V. 34. Paul's preaching was not without fruit. Is. 55, 10. 11. Among those who believed was also a member of the Athenian court, and if Damaris had not been a notable woman, perhaps her name would not have been mentioned. A Christian congregation is said to have been established at Athens. It seems, however, that Paul did not have as great success at Athens as he had at some other places. The entire world we cannot convert, nor have we any promise to this effect; yet the work of preaching the Gospel will never be in vain. 1 Cor. 15, 58. The world needs the Gospel to-day. Not heathen philosophy or the religious systems of man, but only the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ, the God-man and Savior of the world, *will prepare man for an eternal life with God.* 2 Cor. 2, 14—17.

A few samples of how the text may be treated homiletically follow:—

I. *Paul preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ at Athens.* 1. The occasion. 2. The manner. 3. The results.

II. *Christianity triumphs over heathen philosophy.* 1. Christianity teaches the true God, whom the heathen know not. 2. Christianity teaches God's purpose in the creation of man and in the destinies of the nations, which the heathen philosophers failed to understand. 3. Christianity prepares man for eternity, which the philosophy of the heathen cannot do.

III. *Paul preaches at Athens.* 1. The preacher. 2. The audience. 3. The sermon. 4. The results.

IV. *"The foolishness of God is wiser than men."* 1 Cor. 1, 25. For it shows, 1) that man's wisdom is utter foolishness, and 2) that "the foolishness of God" is the highest wisdom.

V. *The world to-day is like Athens of old.* 1. As to its condition. 2. As to its need. 3. As to its attitude toward the Gospel.

VI. *The world needs the written revelation of God;* for otherwise 1) it cannot know the true God, 2) cannot take the right view of life (history), 3) cannot be saved (Christ).

VII. *The new doctrine which the Gospel has brought to the world.* It teaches 1) the true God, 2) that God desires the salvation of all men, 3) that salvation is found in Christ alone. — *Naumann.*

VIII. *Why is the living God to many an unknown God?* Because they despise His manifestation 1) in nature, 2) in history, 3) in the conscience, 4) in the Word (Christ). — *Langsdorff.*

Ansprache zum silbernen Ehejubiläum.

Ps. 136, 1.

In Christo Jesu herzlich geliebtes Jubelpaar!

„Der Herr hat Großes an uns getan, des sind wir fröhlich“, so könnt ihr heute mit Recht ausrufen, wenn ihr auf die verflossenen fünf- und zwanzig Jahre eures Ehelebens zurückblickt. Darum sind denn auch eure Freunde und Verwandten hier erschienen, um euch an diese Tatsache zu erinnern und sich mit euch zu freuen und Gott zu danken.

Es ist gewiß etwas Großes und Beachtenswerthes, wenn Eheleute ein viertel Jahrhundert in glücklicher und friedlicher Ehe haben zubringen dürfen, besonders in unserer letzten, bösen Zeit, wo so viele Ehen leichtfertig geschlossen und ebenso leichtfertig wieder gelöst werden und die Ehescheidungen so schrecklich überhandnehmen, daß auch ernstlich gefinnte weltliche Beamte keinen Rat mehr wissen.

So laßt mich euch denn auffordern zum Lob und Dank gegen Gott durch die Worte des Psalmisten in unserm Text: „Danket dem Herrn“ usw. Die Aufforderung lautet:

„Danket dem Herrn!“

und sie wird zweifach begründet. Ihr sollt Gott danken,

1. weil er so freundlich ist,
2. weil seine Güte ewiglich währet.

1.

„Danket dem Herrn!“ heißt es. Wir sollen ja auch schon Menschen gegenüber dankbar sein, wenn sie uns Gutes tun; aber das, wofür ihr heute danken wollt, habt ihr allein eurem Herrgott zu verdanken; nicht andern Menschen, nicht euch selbst, eurer Klugheit, eurem Geschick und Verstand, sondern dem Herrn, dem Herrn Himmels und der Erde, der alles geschaffen hat, und der heute noch alles erhält und regiert, der auch die Geschicke der einzelnen Menschen in seiner Hand hat.

„Danket dem Herrn!“ heißt es. Danken kommt her von denken. Denkt daran, erkennt es an, was Gott an euch getan hat! (Lied 346, 1.)

Ihr sollt also Gott danken, weil er so freundlich ist.

Wenn ihr auf die verflossenen fünf und zwanzig Jahre eures Ehelebens zurückblickt, so werdet ihr gewiß auch bekennen, daß Gott euch recht freundlich gewesen ist.

War es doch Gott, der eure Herzen zueinander geneigt und euch zusammengeführt hat. Es war Gott, der euch bisher am Leben und bei Gesundheit erhalten hat. Gott hat euren Ehestand mit Kindern gesegnet, mit Söhnen und Töchtern, und Kinder sind eine Gabe Gottes, sagt die Schrift. Gott hat euch und eure Kinder versorgt mit Nahrung

und Kleidung, wenn auch nicht mit Überfluß, so doch also, daß ihr nie Mangel hattet.

Gewiß waren die fünfundzwanzig Jahre nicht lauter Tage des Wohlergehens. Die Sonne des Glücks hat euch nicht immer geschienen. Ohne Kreuz und Trübsal ist es nicht abgegangen, denn Ehestand ist auch Wehestand; und auch im übrigen legt der Herr ja einem jeden Christen ein Kreuz auf. Mit dem großen Kreuzträger Paul Gerhardt bekennet wohl auch ihr: Lied 409, 1. 2.

Wir wissen aber, daß Gott uns nur aus Liebe Kreuz und Trübsal zuschickt, wie ein Vater seine Kinder züchtigt. Darum können wir sagen, daß Gott uns auch mitten im Leiden freundlich war. Denn wir wissen, daß denen, die Gott lieben, alle Dinge zum besten dienen; auch die Trübsal dient nur zu unserm ewigen Heil und Seligkeit. (Lied 357, 1—3.)

Also werdet ihr auch bekennen: Ja, der Herr ist uns immer freundlich gewesen. Wir sind viel zu geringe aller Barmherzigkeit und aller Treue, die Gott an uns getan hat. Die Güte des Herrn ist's, daß wir nicht gar aus sind, und seine Barmherzigkeit hat kein Ende, sondern sie ist alle Morgen neu, und seine Treue ist groß.

Gott hat euch immer wieder Mut und Kraft gegeben, die Mühsale des Lebens und euer Kreuz und eure Trübsal als wahre Kinder Gottes in Geduld zu tragen. Und wie hat er das getan? Durch sein Wort und seine tröstlichen Verheißungen, die süßer sind denn Honig und Honigseim. Hier seht ihr erst recht, wie freundlich Gott euch gewesen ist und wieviel er an euch getan hat im Geistlichen, was er alles für euer Seelenheil getan hat durch sein Wort und den Heiligen Geist.

Darum spricht mit dem Apostel: „Gelobet sei Gott und der Vater unsers Herrn Jesu Christi, der uns gesegnet hat mit allerlei geistlichem Segen in himmlischen Gütern durch Christum!“ Wie reichlich hat Gott euch versorgt mit seinem reinen Wort und Sacrament, wodurch er euch im Glauben gestärkt und bisher erhalten hat trotz Teufel, Welt und eurem eigenen Fleisch.

Sein Wort war eures Fußes Leuchte und ein Licht auf eurem Wege. Es war euer Stecken und Stab, so daß ihr sogar inmitten der Trübsal mit David sprechen konntet: „Ob ich schon wanderte im finstern Thal, fürchte ich kein Unglück, denn du bist bei mir, dein Stecken und Stab tröstet mich.“

Darum, geliebtes Jubelpaar, danket dem Herrn, denn er ist freundlich! Sprecht: „Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele, und was in mir ist, seinen heiligen Namen! Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele, und vergiß nicht, was er dir Gutes getan hat!“

2.

Doch ihr blickt heute nicht nur mit dankerfüllten Herzen in die Vergangenheit, sondern ihr richtet euren Blick auch in die Zukunft. Wie wird es uns da ergehen? so fragt ihr. Wollten wir auf uns selbst und

unser Vermögen sehen, so müßte uns allerdings bange werden; denn wir sind voller Sünden und Gebrechen, schwach und unvernünftig. Wie bald würden wir straucheln und vom Glauben abfallen, wenn wir auf uns selbst angewiesen wären, ja, uns in zeitliches und ewiges Unglück stürzen!

Aber, Gott sei Dank, so steht es nicht. Unser Text gibt uns reichlich Trost, auch gerade für die Zukunft. Er versichert euch, daß ihr nichts zu fürchten habt, sondern getrost und freudig in die Zukunft blicken könnt. Ja, ihr könnt und sollt sogar schon heute im Voraus eurem gnädigen Gott danken für das Gute, das er auch in Zukunft an euch tun will und tun wird. Denn also lautet die Aufforderung: „Danket dem HErrn, denn er ist freundlich; denn seine Güte währet ewiglich.“

Gott ist nicht veränderlich wie die Menschen. Nein, „er ist immer einerlei, gerecht und fromm und ewig treu“. „Die Menschen sind wie eine Wiege, mein Jesus stehet felsenfest.“ Trotz unserer Sünde und Unwürdigkeit will Gott bis in Ewigkeit seine Gnade walten lassen über die, so ihn fürchten. (Lied 214, 5.)

War Gott bisher der Dritte in eurem Ehebunde, o seht, er will es auch in Zukunft sein. Darum ladet ihn ein wie die Emmauszünger und sprecht: „Bleibe bei uns, denn es will Abend werden, und der Tag hat sich geneigt!“ In seinem Wort kommt er zu euch und will euch segnen. O so treibt fleißig sein Wort! Hört es nicht nur in der Kirche, sondern lest und betrachtet es tagtäglich zu Hause; so wird der Segen des HErrn auf euch und euren Kindern ruhen, so daß ihr keinen Mangel habt an irgendeinem Gut. Dann könnt ihr getrost auch in die Zukunft blicken und sagen: „Der HErr ist mein Hirte, mir wird nichts mangeln.“

Und fragen wir: Wie kommt es, daß Gott uns armen Sündern so freundlich sein kann? so lautet die Antwort: In uns und an uns ist nichts, was ihn dazu bewegen könnte. Die Ursache seiner Güte und Freundlichkeit ist einzig und allein seine große Liebe zu uns armen Sündern. Denn „also hat Gott die Welt“, also auch uns, „geliebt, daß er seinen eingebornen Sohn gab, auf daß alle, die an ihn glauben, nicht verloren werden, sondern das ewige Leben haben“. Aus Liebe hat Gott uns seinen Sohn geschenkt. Aus Liebe hat sein lieber Sohn, Jesus Christus, alle unsere Sünden gebüßt durch sein bitteres Leiden und Sterben an Stelle der Menschen. Alle, die nun an Christum glauben, sich seines Verdienstes trösten und sich allein daran halten, die haben Vergebung aller ihrer Sünden und sind Gottes liebe Kinder. Gott läßt über sie seine Gnade und Güte walten, hier in der Zeit und dort in der seligen Ewigkeit, im Himmel, wenn sie das Ziel ihrer irdischen Pilgerschaft erreicht haben.

Seht nun, hat Gott so Großes an euch getan, so viel darangewandt, um euch ewig glücklich und selig zu machen, so werdet ihr doch gewiß das Zutrauen zu ihm haben, daß er euch auch fernerhin im Leiblichen

versorgen kann und wird. Darum könnt ihr getroßt mit dem frommen Dichter bekennen: Lied 323, 2.

Gott schenke euch eine solch freudige Zuversicht und einen solch freudigen Glauben! Er segne euch je mehr und mehr, euch und eure Kinder, in Zeit und Ewigkeit um Christi willen! Amen.

Theo. Dautenhahn.

Dispositionen über die neue epistolische Perikopenreihe der Synodalkonferenz.

Fünfter Sonntag nach Epiphania.

RoL. 2, 16—23.

„Lasset alles ehrlich und ordentlich zugehen!“ Ohne gewisse Ordnungen kann keine Gemeinde oder Synode bestehen. Manche Ordnungen, die wir in unserer Gemeinde haben, dienen dazu, ein bestimmtes Gebot Gottes auszuführen, z. B. Feier des Sonntags, Beichtanmeldung, besonderer Konfirmandenunterricht. Solche Ordnungen wird ein Christ immer gern beobachten. Es gibt aber auch Ordnungen, die rein äußerliche Dinge betreffen, z. B. daß jedes Gemeindeglied, wenn es stimmberechtigt werden will, die Gemeindeordnung unterschreiben soll; ferner, wie die Beamten gewählt werden sollen, wann der Gottesdienst beginnen soll usw. In solchen Dingen sind die Meinungen der Christen vielfach verschieden, aber man fügt sich um der Liebe und des Friedens willen in solche Ordnungen, weil es Mitteldinge sind, die Gott weder geboten noch verboten hat. — Es gibt jedoch auch Menschenfahrungen. Davon redet unser Text. Wir handeln also von

Menschenfahrungen.

Wir sehen,

1. was Menschenfahrungen sind,
2. daß wir Christen frei sind von allen Menschenfahrungen.

1.

Menschenfahrungen, B. 20, sind Menschengebote, B. 22, etwas, was Menschen setzen oder den Christen auflegen wollen, als müßten sie es gewissenshalber halten, um vor Gott etwas zu verdienen, oder als Gottes Gebot. Beispiele:

B. 18. Einhergehen in Demut und Geistlichkeit der Engel usw. Es gab in den Tagen des Apostels Leute, die sich rühmten, daß sie die Engel anbeteten. Das sollte die rechte Demut sein. Der Mensch soll sich zu niedrig und gering halten, Gott anbeten zu dürfen, und zufrieden sein, wenn er mit den Engeln im Gebet verkehren kann. Diese falschen Lehrer verachteten darum die Christen zu Kolossä, weil sie an dem einfachen Evangelium festhielten, und wollten ihnen solche

Sagung auflegen. Aber der Apostel nennt es Menschengebot, B. 18: „nach eigener Wahl einhergehen“. Selbsterwähltes Werk. Gott hat nie geboten, die Engel anzubeten; im Gegenteil, Matth. 4, 10: „Du sollst anbeten Gott“ usw. Die Engel selbst wollen diese Anbetung nicht. — Warum man solche Auffätze hält, B. 18: „aufgeblasen in seinem fleischlichen Sinn“. Bei aller scheinbaren Demut aufgeblasene Menschen, die da meinen, etwas höhere Weisheit, etwas Besseres zu haben als das Evangelium. Aufgeblasen „ohne Sache“, B. 18. Sie stecken noch in einem „fleischlichen Sinn“. — Und die Folge: B. 19: „Und hält sich nicht an dem Haupt“ usw. Das Haupt und alle Glieder des menschlichen Leibes sind aufs innigste verbunden, und so fließt den Gliedern Kraft und Stärke zu. So im Geistlichen. Christus ist das Haupt, von dem der ganze Leib der Kirche Kraft erhält. Wer mehr von seinen selbsterwählten Werken hält als von Christo, „hält sich nicht an dem Haupt“, setzt sein Vertrauen mehr auf das, was er selbst tut, als auf Christum und trennt sich damit von Christo.

Ein anderes Beispiel. B. 21: „die da sagen: Du sollst das nicht angreifen, du sollst das nicht kosten“ usw.; B. 22: „Menschengebot und -lehre“. Die jüdischen Lehrer meinten, man müsse das jüdische Zeremonialgesetz noch halten. Menschengebote betreffs reiner und unreiner Tiere, Speise oder Trank, bestimmter Feiertage, Sabbater, Beschneidung. Ja, die Pharisäer hatten noch viel mehr Gesetze, als Moses gegeben hatte; Hände waschen, Matth. 15, 2; Werke der Liebe und Not am Sabbat verboten, Matth. 12, 10 ff.; Sabbaterweg; Auffätze der Ältesten.

Solche Leute gibt es noch heute. Adventisten: Man muß den Sabbat halten, weil er von Gott eingesetzt ist. Andere Kirchengemeinschaften: Der Sonntag ist an Stelle des Sabbats getreten und als von Gott geordnet zu halten. Temperänzler: Geistige Getränke trinken, sei in der Bibel verboten. Baptisten: Man müsse die Täuflinge untertauchen. Eine Welt von Menschengeboten finden wir im Papsttum: Priester dürfen nicht heiraten; am Freitag sollst du kein Fleisch essen, den Wein im Abendmahl darfst du nicht trinken, an diesen und jenen Tagen mußt du fasten (1 Tim. 4, 3: „meiden die Speise“ usw.), dem Priester mußt du deine Sünden beichten usw. Wenn du noch etwas besonders Verdienstliches tun willst, so gehe ins Kloster. Alles Menschenlehren, „die nichts denn Menschengebot sind“, Matth. 15, 9. Die Katholiken haben viele Heilige, die als Vorbilder hingestellt werden. Aber was ist es, was mitunter von ihnen gerühmt wird? Daß sie ihr Leben lang nie Fleisch gegessen, nur Wasser getrunken, nie in einem Bett geschlafen haben. Schlimm genug, wenn man aus „eigener Wahl“, B. 18, aus eigener Andacht, „nach seines Herzens Dünken“, 4 Mos. 15, 39, solche Werke wählt; noch schlimmer, wenn man sie ändern zum Gewissen machen will.

Warum tut man solche Werke? 1. Sie haben vor Men-

schen einen großen Schein; B. 23: „Schein der Weisheit durch selbst-erwählte Geistlichkeit und Demut“ usw. Sie gleißen. Der Mensch glüht dabei vor Andacht. Geistlicher Hochmut. 2. Man will dadurch vor Gott etwas verdienen, eine höhere Stellung erlangen. Rechtfertigung durch Werke.

Alle solche Werke sind Gott ein Greuel. 1 Sam. 15, 22: „Gehorsam ist besser denn Opfer.“ Was ein gutes Werk ist, kann nur Gott bestimmen. Das hat er getan in den zehn Geboten. Welche Torheit, wenn ein Mensch mehr tun will, als Gott für gut befunden hat! Man möchte einwenden: Sie tun es aber in guter Meinung. Aber die gute Meinung macht selbsterwählte Werke nicht gut. Wer sich auf seine Meinung verläßt, ist ein Narr. In guter Meinung haben Leute schon die größten Schandtaten vollbracht; vgl. Joh. 16, 2.

Mit solchen Werken kann man auch vor Gott nichts verdienen. In der Rechtfertigung sind alle Gesetzeswerke ausgeschlossen. Eph. 2, 9: „nicht aus den Werken“; 2 Tim. 1, 9: „nicht nach unsern Werken“; Tit. 3, 5: „nicht um der Werke willen“. Kann man nicht einmal durch des Gesetzes Werke, die doch gut sind und von Gott geboten, etwas verdienen, wieviel weniger durch selbsterwählte Werke! Matth. 15, 9: „Vergeblich dienen sie mir“ usw. So viel Verdienst man sich selbst zuschreibt, so viel raubt man Gott an seiner Ehre. Man treibt Abgötterei und setzt das Evangelium beiseite. Wenn man durch Werke etwas verdienen könnte, hätte Gott seinen Sohn nicht in die Welt zu schicken brauchen. (Lied 205, 8.) Denen aber, die solche Werke lehren, ruft Gott zu: „Siehe, ich will an die Propheten“, usw., Jer. 23, 31.

2.

Wir Christen sind frei von allen Menschen-sagen. B. 16: „So laßt nun niemand euch Gewissen machen“ = etwas aufs Gewissen legen, als müßte man dieses oder jenes Menschengebot halten. „über Speise oder über Trank.“ Wir können essen und trinken, was wir wollen und wann wir wollen. Keine Vorschrift! Röm. 14, 2. 22. Sabbathe oder Feiertage. Wir können irgendeinen Tag in der Woche feiern, Röm. 14, 5.

Wir sind frei vom jüdischen Zeremonialgesetz. Was darin enthalten war, war nur Schatten und Vorbild auf Christum, B. 17; Hebr. 9, 9. 10. Der Körper ist in Christo. In ihm ist alles erfüllt. Nun ist dies Gesetz abgetan. Wer nun noch Stücke davon, z. B. bestimmte Tage oder bestimmte Nahrung, als von Gott geboten oder verboten annimmt, stellt sich wieder unter das Zeremonialgesetz, „versucht Gott“, Apost. 15, 10, macht alle Arbeit Gottes an seinem Herzen vergeblich, Gal. 4, 10. 11: „umsonst an euch gearbeitet“; steht in Gefahr, seine Seele zu verlieren, Gal. 5, 2: „so ist euch Christus kein nütze“. Was für ein Joch war das im Alten Testament! „Laßt euch nicht

wiederum in das knechtische Joch fangen!“ Gal. 5, 1. R. 20: „So ihr denn nun abgestorben seid mit Christo den Sätzen der Welt“ usw. Los seid ihr von den Sätzen der Welt. Laßt sie euch nicht aufs neue als Gesetze auflegen! Wir sind selbst frei von Gottes Gesetz, Röm. 10, 4; 1 Tim. 1, 9; Gal. 4, 5. Daß wir die Gebote halten, tun wir willig, aus Liebe und Dankbarkeit, weil wir Gott dienen wollen. Sind wir frei von Gottes Gesetz, wieviel mehr von Menschen=sätzen!

Darum soll niemand den Christen ein Gesetz auf=legen, Menschen=sätzen ihnen zum Gewissen machen. Niemand darf über das Gewissen eines andern herrschen. Niemand darf in der Kirche herrschen, kein Papst, Bischof, Pastor, Präses, Gemeinde, Synode, weltliche Obrigkeit, Matth. 20, 25. 26; 23, 11; vgl. 2 Kor. 8, 8; 1, 24; 1 Petr. 5, 3; Kol. 1, 25; 2 Kor. 4, 5. Die Christen sind untereinander alle gleich. Keiner ist dem andern über= oder untergeordnet, Matth. 23, 8. Da kann keiner dem andern etwas vorschreiben oder zum Gewissen machen. Ein Christ ist ein freier Herr über alle Dinge und niemand untertan. Als Christen haben wir niemand über uns als Christum. Was Christus freigelassen hat, darf uns niemand zur Sünde machen oder als ein göttliches Gebot hinstellen.

Wer sich dennoch solche Gewalt anmaßt, stößt Christum vom Thron, ist ein Rebell, Anarchist, Revolutionär. Da darf man nicht gehorchen, Gal. 5, 1; Tit. 1, 14. 18. In Mittel dingen ist ein Christ sehr nachgiebig, fängt keinen Streit an, noch weniger spaltet er die Gemeinde. Will man aber etwas zum Gewissen machen, was Gott nicht geboten hat, dann weicht er „nicht eine Stunde“, Gal. 2, 5. Selbst ein Sklave läßt sich von einem andern Herrn nichts gebieten. Wenn jemand dennoch solche Menschen=sätzen als göttliche Gebote hält, so geschieht es ihm recht, wenn er geplagt wird, Hos. 5, 11.

Wir wollen Gott danken, daß er uns freigemacht hat, daß auch wir berufen sind zu der herrlichen Freiheit der Kinder Gottes. Wir wollen sie hochschätzen. Wie hoch steht einem Volk die Freiheit, die durch große Opfer von Gut und Blut erkaufte worden ist! Gott erhalte uns in solcher Freiheit bis an unser seliges Ende! E. E.

Sonntag Sexagesimä.

Apost. 16, 24—34.

In der Heiligen Schrift wird den Menschen bei ihrer Seelen Seligkeit geboten, sich zu bekehren, Ges. 18, 2. Was wird damit von ihnen gefordert? Nach 1 Petr. 2, 25 heißt bekehren, sich trennen von dem Irrtum, der Sünde, und sich hinkehren zu dem Hirten und Bischof der Seelen, Jesus Christus; und nehmen wir Apost. 11, 21 hinzu, so ist Bekehrung das Gläubigwerden eines Sünders an Christum. Die Epheßer waren vor ihrer Bekehrung ohne Christum, aber nach ihrer Be=

kehrung in Christo, Eph. 2, 12. 13. So sagen wir recht: Befehren ist das Umkehren und Wiederkommen des Sünders im Glauben zu seinem Gott, von dem er durch die Sünde gewichen war, das Sichwenden von der Sünde zu dem Retter von Sünden. — In der Heiligen Schrift wird uns jedoch nicht nur in Worten, sondern auch an Beispielen dargestellt, was Befehrung ist. Ein solches Beispiel ist der Kerkermeister zu Philippi. Wir betrachten daher auf Grund unserer Epistel

Die Befehrung des Kerkermeisters zu Philippi:

1. den Kerkermeister vor seiner Befehrung,
2. seine Befehrung und
3. die Früchte seiner Befehrung.

1.

a. Wenn man eine Sache recht klarmachen will, so ist es zumeist vorteilhaft, wenn man erst das Gegenteil derselben schildert. Wir betrachten daher zunächst den Kerkermeister vor seiner Befehrung, B. 24—27. Paulus und Silas waren auf einer Missionsreise nach Philippi, der Hauptstadt Mazedoniens, gekommen. Hier predigten sie das Wort Gottes und trieben einen bösen Geist aus von einer Wahrsagerin. Darüber wurden ihre Herren sowie das Volk der Stadt erhobt, schleppten sie vor Gericht, brachten falsch Zeugnis gegen sie, rissen die Kleider von ihnen, stäubten sie und ließen sie ins Gefängnis werfen und ihre Füße in den Stock legen. Vom Kerkermeister dieses Gefängnisses redet unsere Epistel.

a. Er war ein Grieche, also ein Heide und Götzendiener. Er mochte vom Gott Israels gehört haben, glaubte aber nicht an ihn. Er diente den Götzen. — Alle Unbefehrten sind Götzendiener. Wenn auch nicht den Götzen von Holz und Stein, so dienen sie doch dem Gott Mammon, dem dreiköpfigen Götzen der Augenlust, der Fleischeslust und des hoffärtigen Lebens.

b. Er wußte nichts von unserm Heiland und dem Weg zur Seligkeit. Wenn überhaupt, so wollte er durch des Gesetzes Werke selig werden. Er war darum der christlichen Religion, die alle Werkgerechtigkeit verdammt, feind und hat, obwohl er der Hauptleute Befehl ausführen mußte, auch nicht den geringsten Unwillen gezeigt, als er Paulus und Silas ins Gefängnis werfen und in den Stock legen mußte. — So sind alle Unbefehrten. Sie kennen Christum nicht und wollen durch ihre guten Werke selig werden. Darum sind sie dem Evangelium feind, weil dieses den Menschen aus Gnaden, um Christi willen, durch den Glauben selig werden heißt. Die evangelische Predigt ist den Griechen eine Torheit und den Juden ein Ürgernis.

c. Der Kerkermeister hatte sich bisher bloß um seine irdische Wohlfahrt gekümmert. Das Erdbeben erinnerte ihn zunächst nicht an Tod, Gericht und Ewigkeit, sondern nur an den gewissen Verlust seines Amtes und Brotes, falls die Gefangenen entflohen wären. — So sind alle Un-

befehrten nur bedacht auf ein gutes Leben in dieser Welt und suchten das für sich zu sichern. Sie finden ihr Glück im Irdischen und hängen mit ihren Herzen daran. Sie leben sicher dahin.

b. Sind vielleicht manche unter uns, die dem Kerkermeister gleichen? Die sind noch nicht bekehrt, und ich ermahne sie: Bekehrt euch, solange es noch heute heißt! Erkennt und bereut eure Sünden und glaubt an den Herrn Jesum, euren Heiland! — Wie ihr dazu kommt, das erkennen wir an dem Kerkermeister zu Philippi.

2.

a. Nicht mit seiner Erweckung durch das Erdbeben ist die Befeh-
rung des Kerkermeisters geschehen, B. 25—30. Während Paulus und Silas im Gefängnis lagen und beteten, geschah ein Erdbeben, wodurch die Türen des Gefängnisses aufgetan und der Gefangenen Fesseln gelöst wurden. Darüber war der Kerkermeister sehr erschrocken, denn er befürchtete, die Gefangenen wären alle geflüchtet, und wollte sich in sein Schwert stürzen. Er stand am Rande der Verzweiflung, und nur die Gnade unsers Gottes hat ihn vor einem schrecklichen Ende bewahrt; denn die hat es bewirkt, daß der Kerkermeister, anstatt zu verzweifeln, in dem Erdbeben die Stimme und die gewaltige Hand und die große Nähe unsers Gottes erkannte, über sich selbst erschrak, aus seinem Sündenschlaf erwachte und in seiner Seele tief ergriffen wurde und Gottes Zorn und Strafe fürchtete. Er dachte nun daran, wo es hin-
führen würde, falls er in seinen Sünden stirbe. Er wurde besorgt und fragte: „Liebe Herren“ usw.? Das Erdbeben war also das Mittel in Gottes Hand, wodurch er bewirkte, was er sonst durch die Gesetzespredigt ausrichtet. Aber bekehrt wurde der Kerkermeister dadurch nicht. — Nicht durch die Gesetzespredigt noch durch wunderbare Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen wird der Mensch bekehrt, selbst wenn er dadurch, in seinem Innern getroffen, gerührt, zur Erkenntnis und zum Erschrecken über seine Sünden gebracht wird und nach Rettung schreit. Erweckung ist noch keine Bekehrung.

b. Mit der Erlangung des Glaubens durch der Apostel Wort ist des Kerkermeisters Bekehrung zustande gekommen, B. 31. 32. Wenn ein Mensch wie der Kerkermeister über seine Sünden erschrocken ist und nach Vergebung verlangt, dann soll ihm Christus gepredigt werden. Darum antwortete Paulus dem Kerkermeister: „Glaube an den Herrn Jesum“ usw. Der Glaube an den Herrn Jesum rettet von Tod, Hölle, Zorn und Gericht und macht unsere Seelen selig, Joh. 3, 16. 18. Und der Kerkermeister tat durch Gottes Gnade, wozu ihn der Apostel aufforderte: er hat seinen Götzen abgesagt und sich im Glauben zu Christo gekehrt, auf ihn sein ganzes Vertrauen und seine Hoffnung gesetzt; allerdings nicht aus eigener Kraft, sondern mit jener Aufforderung und Einladung zum Glauben wurde ihm auch zugleich der Glaube geschenkt. So wurde der Kerkermeister bekehrt, bekehrt durch das Wort, das die Apostel ihm sagten. — Nicht anders kommt heute

noch jede wahre Belehrung zustande, nämlich durch das Hören des Wortes Gottes, 1 Petr. 1, 23. Alle andern Mittel und Wege, durch welche man den Menschen belehren will, sind falsch, Schwarmgeisterei. Sie gewähren dem Menschen keinen beständigen Trost, keinen wahren Frieden der Seele und keine selige Hoffnung des ewigen Lebens. Es folgen auch nicht die Früchte, an welchen die rechte Belehrung erkannt werden soll.

3.

a. Wo die Belehrung nicht eine bloße Erweckung, äußerliche Reform usw. ist, sondern in einer gläubigen Umkehr zu Gott und unserm Heiland besteht, da zeitigt sie gute Früchte. Eben der Glaube, worin die Belehrung wesentlich besteht, ist durch die Liebe tätig, Gal. 5, 6. So auch die Belehrung des Kerkermeisters.

a. Er hat den beiden Gottesmännern die Striemen, die ihnen in der Stäupung geschlagen wurden und noch bluteten, abgewaschen, B. 33. Ein Bekehrter tut Werke der Liebe.

b. Paulus und Silas hatten ohne Zweifel in ihrer Belehrung des Kerkermeisters (B. 32) auch der heiligen Sakramente Erwähnung getan; denn nach des Heilandes Wort soll der, welcher an das Evangelium glaubt, sich auch taufen lassen, Mark. 16, 16. Und der Kerkermeister war dem Wort gehorsam und ließ sich taufen mit den Seinen. Das ist auch eine Frucht der Belehrung, daß der Bekehrte dem Wort gehorsam ist und die heiligen Sakramente gebraucht.

c. Daß der Kerkermeister belehrt war, beweist auch die Frucht, die in B. 34 beschrieben wird. Was Paulus später allen Christen gebot, Gal. 6, 6, das sehen wir hier den belehrten Kerkermeister tun. Er hat Paulus und Silas, die ihm das Wort gesagt hatten, in sein Haus geführt und beherbergt und dabei seine Freude bezeugt darüber, daß er mit den Seinen an Gott gläubig geworden war. — Beherbergen, Gutes tun an denen, die uns unterrichten in Gottes Wort, Erhaltung von Kirche und Schule, das sind Werke belehrter Christen.

b. Prüfen wir uns nun, ob wir, die wir uns für belehrte Christen halten, diese Früchte hervorbringen. Wenn wir uns prüfen, so werden wir finden, daß es bei uns noch an so manchem mangelt. Halten wir uns darum fleißig zu Wort und Sakrament und beten wir tagtäglich: Jer. 31, 18!

J. B.

Outlines on Free Texts.

HEB. 5, 12—14.

The teaching of dogmas is taboo in many churches. To be dogmatic is considered impolite. "Deeds, not creeds," is the slogan of our indifferentistic age. The boast of many clergymen is that they have never subscribed to a creed. But when these modernists posit

their ideas about God, the Bible, Jesus Christ, the origin and existence of man and the universe by evolution, the salvation of man by deeds, etc., they are setting forth their own dogmas, pagan doctrines indeed, but doctrines nevertheless. Their cry about our being too dogmatic should not disconcert us.

Jesus, in His divine commission: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," demands the teaching of most specific dogmas without reservation and restriction. The writer of the text as well, but he makes a distinction between them.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES VARY IN IMPORTANCE.

1. *Some are simple, but very essential.*
2. *Others are difficult, but should also be coveted.*

1.

St. Paul, in our text, speaks of "the first principles of the oracles of God," *lit.*, "the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles." He compares them with "milk." He addresses these words, no doubt, to the Christians in Judea, especially in Jerusalem, because these congregations were largely composed of such as had come from the Jews. These Christians were in need of "milk" because they were yet unskilled or inexperienced in the Word of Righteousness. V. 13. The oracles of God are set forth in the Old, Rom. 3, 2; Acts 7, 38, and in the New Testament, 1 Pet. 4, 11. The "Word of Righteousness" can be none other than these oracles. In both instances Paul refers to knowledge which should be the possession of Christians.

Some Christian doctrines are therefore simple, food for babes, the elements of the Christian religion, which neophytes must learn. The apostle upbraids his readers because they are deficient in this respect. 1 Cor. 3, 1, 2. These doctrines are simple, but they are very essential. 1 Pet. 2, 2. Therefore our Catechism calls them the "chief parts," most important, most essential. Necessary unto salvation.

These doctrines are simple, not because they can be more readily grasped, mastered, and fathomed by human reason. The simplest doctrines are divine revelations, "hidden" wisdom, and not wisdom of this world. 1 Cor. 2, 6, 7; 1, 19—21. This "hidden" wisdom is foolishness unto every natural man. 1 Cor. 1, 18; 2, 8, 14; Gal. 1, 11, 12. Mark well, even the very first lessons in Christian doctrine are foolishness unto natural man. But they are simple because a child can know them and be brought to faith by them. 2 Tim. 3, 15. (Matt. 18, 3.) The boy Jesus in the Temple. Luke 2, 46. (Ps. 119, 105.)

Paul mentions some of these principal doctrines. Heb. 6, 1, 2. Our Catechism contains the chief parts of Christian doctrine; therefore we teach these to our children and all new converts. But our Catechism also asserts that the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is "the chief article of the Christian doctrine." Before we teach

a dying man the doctrine concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we direct him to Christ, preaching sin and grace. That is most essential.

Thus our Christians learn that the Bible is the only divinely inspired and the only inerrant Book, the only guide to heaven. Also the only true God, the true Jesus of the Bible, the work of the Holy Ghost, the forgiveness of sins by grace, not by works, the invisible and the true visible Church, the need and value of absolution, the true Sacraments — these truths they learn to distinguish from false doctrines.

These chief doctrines Christians should learn. They must needs be censured if they are laggard and slothful in this respect. Note the text. Necessary because there are ten thousand foes who assail these fundamentals. If Christians are not grounded in these simple truths, they are lacking the doctrines most essential to salvation. Dr. Dau says: "Just as persons of every age use milk and need milk, Christians of every age need the Catechism." If you lack the knowledge of these essentials, there is grave danger that your Christianity is but sham. Be watchful and pray. Do not become satiated because you imagine you have learned these things too well. Such self-satisfaction is a snare. (Note what Luther and others say about the value of the Catechism, *Theol. Quart.*, 18, 181. 183.)

But as there are simple truths in the Bible which are very essential, so there are more difficult doctrines, which Christians should also desire to learn.

2.

In some respects the Christians in Judea are praised. They had endured great afflictions. Heb. 10, 32—34; 12, 4—8. They had been diligent in labors of love. Heb. 6, 10. But they had not grown in the knowledge of the oracles of God. They ought to be teachers. V. 12. Paul calls the Jews, Rom. 2, 20, teachers of babes because they possessed the oracles of God. The text presupposes that they ought to possess this knowledge. "Strong meat," solid food, is for full-grown men, v. 14, who, by reason of habitude of mental exercise, have their perceptive faculties of the mind exercised to distinguish between things that are beneficial and such as are harmful to their spiritual life. "For the time," v. 12, *i. e.*, by reason of the time. About three decades had elapsed since these Jewish Christians had embraced the faith, and in these years they should have grown to the full stature of men. Col. 1, 28.

The more difficult doctrine in which the Hebrew Christians ought to have become well versed is that Christ is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Vv. 10. 11. Vincent, *Word Studies*: "The Hebrew Christians were not familiar with Christ under the aspect of a High Priest. They did not understand the application of the

title and office to Him. They could not infer it from His early life, since He was not of the lineage of Aaron, nor from His ministry, since He claimed no special privilege of access to the Temple, performed no priestly functions, and contradicted the whole Jewish conception of the priesthood." These Jewish Christians still beheld the ancient splendor of the priesthood and the Temple with its ceremonies. They were surrounded by zealous Jews. Hence it was all the more necessary that they should learn to regard these institutions as mere shadows, realizing that the body is in Christ, that the glory of the Christian religion far surpasses that of Judaism. Therefore the apostle takes up this doctrine of Christ, the High Priest, from chapter seven on.

Considering the time that has elapsed since you have received the milk of the Word, considering also the fact that these essentials have often been presented in print, from the pulpit, and in public catechizations, we should reasonably expect you to be teachers of others, to be fit for solid food. We can apply the words of Paul, 1 Cor. 1, 4—6, to our congregation. You should have advanced to a fair understanding of the more difficult doctrines. Let there be a holy covetousness on your part to delve more and more deeply into the sweet and precious doctrines of your salvation. You may have become but superficially acquainted with them, and you may not have striven toward the deeper things. Learn more about the Bible than you do; learn to defend it against the many enemies of God, who herald many arguments against its inspiration. Learn to understand the deeper mysteries of the person of Christ and of His work. Learn to find Christ in the Old Testament after you have found Him in the New Testament. Learn to understand better the doctrine concerning the Church, the doctrine of election, etc. Thus you will become a perfect man in Christ, and thus you will be enabled to silence all gainsayers. You will advance from childhood to manhood.

As a tree thrives in a kindly and well-watered soil, so the Christian should grow in wisdom and knowledge. God, in His Word, gives you the strength to grow the more diligently you busy yourself with this "power of God." You will become rooted, and no winds and tempests of error will uproot your faith. Eph. 4, 14; Heb. 13, 9.

O. C. A. B.

JOHN 17, 3.

All men by nature know that there is a God. Ps. 14, 1. But, alas! Natural man, wretchedly perverted, does not worship the true God. The Gentiles (Rom. 1, 19); unbelievers in countries where Christianity prevails: atheists, agnostics, pantheists, materialists, evolutionists, etc. More than half of the population of our country refuse to worship their Creator and their Redeemer. Rom. 10, 21. —

Every false worship is an abomination in the sight of God. Matt. 4, 10; John 4, 21—24. Hence the importance of the question, Do we worship God in spirit and in truth? Upon the basis of the text let us consider:—

A CHRISTIAN'S WORSHIP OF GOD.

1. A true worship;

2. a blessed worship.

1.

A. a) In our text Christ describes true worship of God. His words are a part of His intercessory prayer before His Passion. This prayer was made on behalf of His believing followers, vv. 6. 8. 9, whom now we would call true Christians. b) Who are true Christians? Christ answers this in John 16, 31: "Do ye now *believe?*" Faith in Christ, the divine-human Redeemer of the world, who has died for the sins of the world, is the mark of true Christians. Only true Christians worship God aright. Why is their worship of God a true worship?

B. a) It is a true worship because they worship the *true God*, the Triune God. Text: "Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." The two persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son, are here expressly named. The text really includes also the Holy Ghost, for it is by Him that *Christians* truly *know* God and Christ. John 16, 7—11. 13; 15, 26. All the words referred to in the parallel passages are a part of Christ's farewell address and prayer, in which He testifies that the Father is God, that the Holy Ghost is God, that He Himself is true God. Cf. John 17, 5. True worship, then, means worship of the true God. All worship that is not worship of the true God is idolatry. Is. 6, 3; John 5, 23; Phil. 2, 10, 11; Rom. 8, 9; Matt. 28, 19.

b) A Christian's worship of God is a true worship because he worships God in spirit and in truth. a) He worships God as the Holy Scriptures bid him do. His is not a worship invented by his own evil heart. Text: "*Know* Thee and Jesus Christ." To know means more than to have a mere historical knowledge. It means to acknowledge God and Christ in true faith. A Christian acknowledges the whole plan of salvation of the Triune God. Text: "Whom Thou hast sent." As a poor miserable sinner a Christian puts his trust in Christ, his Savior, and by faith appropriates His merits. As a believing Christian he rejoices in the salvation wrought by Christ and gratefully acknowledges the Author of his salvation. b) Thus a Christian's entire life becomes a worship of God in the spirit of Christ. aa) Through faith he *fears, loves, and trusts* in God above all things. bb) Through faith he prays and renders thanks in Christ's name. cc) Through faith he loves God's Word and gladly hears and learns it. dd) Through faith he loves his neighbor and serves him. For him to live is Christ. Rom. 14, 7. 8; Gal. 2, 19, 20.

C. Observe the difference between the worship of a Christian and that of a non-Christian. a) All who are not Christians worship their idols in order to gain salvation. Theirs is a worship of work-righteousness. b) The Christian worships God as a redeemed and sanctified child of God, whose whole life and whose every thought, word, and deed are grateful acknowledgments of the tender mercies of the true God, who in Christ Jesus has secured for him, and bestowed upon him, eternal life. c) "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." 2 Cor. 13, 5. Blessed is every one who as a true Christian worships the true God.

2.

A. Christian worship of God is a blessed worship. Text: "This is *life eternal*." This means: All those who in faith worship the true God have eternal life. Here Christ mentions the supreme *bliss of man*, the final end of his faith.

B. What is the life of which the Savior speaks in the text? Life is a) freedom from spiritual death; a) forgiveness of sins, Matt. 9, 2; b) deliverance from the curse of the Law, Gal. 4, 4, 5; c) freedom from the dominion of Satan, Col. 1, 13; d) freedom from God's wrath, John 16, 27; e) freedom from the agony and despair of temporal death, John 11, 25; f) freedom from hell, 1 Cor. 15, 55; b) blissful communion with the Triune God through faith in Christ Jesus, John 14, 23; 1 Cor. 3, 16. All that man had lost in Adam, he has gained in Christ. 1 Cor. 15, 22. "For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

C. Text: a) "This is *life eternal*." Rom. 5, 2; 8, 24. The promise is absolute, unconditional. b) A Christian will possess it in glory in the life to come. John 14, 1—23. Wonderful promise! Rev. 14, 13; 1 John 3, 2; John 11, 25, 26. c) How great is this comfort! Blessed, indeed, is the Christian who worships God in spirit and in truth. a) He has peace, John 14, 27. b) He has love. John 16, 27. c) He has joy. 1 Pet. 3, 14. d) He has hope. Rom. 8, 24. e) He has comfort in tribulation. Rom. 8, 32. f) God is his Father and Christ his Savior. Text.

D. a) Let us worship the true God through faith in Christ Jesus. a) By word. b) By deed. b) Let us preach the Gospel to others, that they may worship the true King, Lord, and Savior to the glory of God and their eternal salvation.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

PS. 111, 9b.

In these brief words shines forth all the glory and splendor of the great God, and our whole conduct and relation toward Him is comprehensively defined.

THE HOLY NAME OF THE LORD.

1. What the "name" of the Lord implies.
2. How that "name" should be regarded.

1.

a) When God speaks of the "name of the Lord, thy God," He refers us, of course, to the distinctive terms by which God is designated or known in Holy Writ, such as God, Lord, Jehovah, the Holy One, the Almighty, Father, Light, Life, Word, Redeemer, Savior, Spirit, etc. Is. 9, 6; Ex. 3, 13: "I AM THAT I AM." "The Hebrews pride themselves on having ten names of God, as also Jerome testifies, of which they regard with great superstition the one they call Tetragrammaton." (Luther, IV, 491ff.; XX, 2057. Pieper, *Dogmatik*, I, 463. 530f. — By these names God reveals Himself to us, since according to His essence and qualities He is absolutely what these terms imply. Our faith is rewarded with glimpses of the heart of God as it meditates upon the various names of the Lord.

b) Yet the Scriptural term "the name of the Lord" implies more than the mere appellations by which God is known. The whole revelation of God, in His attributes, in His Word, and in His works, composes His name.

God reveals Himself to us when He unfolds His character, His essence, His qualities and attributes. (Cat., Qu. 104.) Jacob thirsted for a deeper acquaintance with that Angel of the Lord who in His mercy had striven with him in the darkness; he longed for a fuller and more satisfying knowledge of God, who had just blessed him. This desire of his heart Jacob expresses in the words: "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name." Gen. 32, 29. — God promised Moses: "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." "And the Lord descended . . . and proclaimed the name of the Lord." Ex. 33, 18—23; 34, 5—7. That shining galaxy of divine attributes are "the glories that compose Thy name."

Since the entire Bible is a revelation of God made by Himself, it is an "expanded name of the Lord." (Pieper, *Dogmatik*, I, 532.)

Moreover, all the honorable and glorious works of the Lord, since God is manifested in them, are implied in the "name" of God. Cf. context, vv. 1—9. Ps. 19. All the great works of creation, of redemption, and of sanctification are so many rays centering in the glorious sun which is the "name" of the Lord. "The syllables of that name are all the deeds by which He has taught us what He is." (Maclaren.) "God's name, in fine, is everything revealed concerning God and everything that serves to promote the knowledge, worship, glory, praise, and confession of God, such as singing, praying, preaching, meditating, confessing, communing, etc." (Dallmann, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 45.)

We say "crown." We mean not merely the gold, but the form as well, the engraving, the sparkling jewels: the whole dazzling thing is the crown. A garden is not merely an enclosure; but every flower, shrub, blade of grass, fountain, the harmony of its arrangements, the profusion of its colors, everything blends in one beautiful spot called garden. The columns, aisles, pews, windows, walls, roofs, the harmony of its proportions, the whole piece of splendid architecture is the cathedral. Similarly, the sum total of the revelations of God in His appellations, qualities, Word, works, is the "name" of the Lord.

2.

a) "Holy and reverend is His name." God's name is holy. Ps. 99, 3. 5. 9; 103, 1; Ezek. 36, 22; 39, 7; Is. 6, 3; 57, 15. "Reverend," to be revered, to be regarded with worshipful, trustful, veneration. Deut. 28, 58; Ps. 99, 3; 130, 4; Dan. 9, 4.

b) The name of the Lord must be regarded by us in thought, word, deed, life, as holy and reverend. The Second Commandment. Ex. 20, 7. (Luther, VII, 771; III, 1194.)

"The name of God is used properly when the Word of God is preached correctly and the hearers receive it aright." (Luther, III, 1076.) Law and Gospel. Especially the doctrine of the vicarious atonement; the doctrine of justification. "Pray, praise, and give thanks." Abraham, Gen. 12, 8; 13, 4. (Luther, I, 781f.) Mary, Luke 2, 19; 11, 28; Ps. 69, 30; 92, 1; 103; 116, 17. "Like Jeremiah, like John the Baptist, like Stephen, like Paul, like Luther, like many other saints of God, we must be jealous of God's holy name and let no shadow fall on His glory and saving truth." (Dallmann, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 34.) Our preaching, hearing, believing, singing, confessing, must be positively orthodox. — The holy and reverend name of God is desecrated and profaned by false doctrine and by a false faith. Indifferentism, unionism, modernism. Zeph. 3, 4; Ezek. 13, 19; 22, 26; Jer. 23, 31; Matt. 15, 8; 7, 21. (Pieper, *Dogmatik*, I, 532. Luther, III, 1076. 1078ff.)

Our whole life must be constantly so attuned that it is in perfect accord with, and redounds to, the glory of the name of the Lord. Matt. 5, 16; John 15, 8; 1 Pet. 1, 15; 1 Cor. 10, 31; Col. 3, 17. (Luther, VII, 764; XII, 1757.) — God's name is blasphemed by ungodly living, cursing, swearing, jesting, etc. Rom. 2, 23f; Ezek. 36, 22f.; Mal. 2, 11; David, 2 Sam. 12, 14. Every evil deed, word, thought, is a discord in the harmony, casts a shadow on the lambent splendor of His holy name.

Christ in His life and death, in His meekness and sweetness, in His calm wisdom and infinite patience, yearning over sinful hearts and weeping over rebels, by word and deed, in His active and passive obedience, did what He professes at the end: "I have declared unto

them Thy name and will declare it." John 17, 26. 4. Yea, we must cast ourselves in the dust before God as the instruments of His glory and say with Christ: "Father, glorify Thy name!" John 12, 28. (Hymn 263, 4; 396, 2.)

Cleveland, O.

H. W. BARTELS.

PS. 1.

"Blessed" — with this exquisite word begins the Book of Psalms, those songs of saintly souls, the greatest and truest hymns of faith ever written. What does this beautiful word mean? We might say it signifies happy, truly happy, most fortunate, really successful, genuinely prosperous; but it has a deeper spiritual meaning than all these, *viz.*, "enjoying God's favor." (Cf. Carlyle: "There is in man a higher than love of happiness; he can do without happiness and instead thereof find blessedness." — *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, chap. 9.)

All men seek happiness, success. Hence every man ought to be interested in knowing what the Book of books has to say on this subject of universal concern. It has a great deal to say about "blessedness" and "blessing," about happiness and genuine joy; but we shall limit ourselves to inquiring what the first of the 150 psalms has to tell us about "blessedness." Whom does it pronounce truly happy?

As a sort of prelude to the heavenly music of the Psalter (one of the great divisions of the Bible) it sings very aptly and properly of the blessedness of the lover of God's Word.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE LOVER OF GOD'S WORD.

1. *The unfailing source of his blessedness.*
2. *The constant duration of his blessedness.*

1.

a. Who is a lover of God's Word? Not he who merely hears it or reads it, but he who does it. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." Jas. 1, 22—25; John 13, 17. Not he who hears and then permits the enemy of the Word to take it away, but he who "keeps" it, guards it, watches it as a precious treasure. Luke 11, 28; Matt. 13, 19. — Let us not deceive ourselves on this point, otherwise we shall miss the message of our psalm completely.

b. This man will not seek his happiness at a very popular source; he will not try to obtain it by following the counsel of the ungodly (the wicked), by walking the path of wilful sinners, or sitting in the assembly of the scornful (the mockers, scoffers). Jer. 15, 17: "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers." Similar statements Ps. 26, 4. 5. 9. 10. See also Ps. 10, 2—11 for description of one form of wickedness. The ungodly, of course, *imagine* they will derive happiness from their course. Luke 16, 19. 25.

c. V. 2a. His delight is in the Law of the Lord, in God's Word, which tells him of an unerring way to happiness. (The glorious attributes of this Word are described in detail in Ps. 19, especially in vv. 7—11, and in Ps. 119.

By this Word he has been born again. 1 Pet. 1, 23. It is able to make him wise unto salvation. 2 Tim. 3, 15. This wisdom is his greatest delight; for, being justified by faith, he has peace with God, etc., Rom. 5, 1, a peace which passeth all understanding, Phil. 4, 7.

The happiness of the believer in Christ Jesus is written in imperishable letters in both testaments of the Bible: Ps. 32, 1. 2a; Rom. 4, 7. 8 (a quotation of the former); and all the other "blessednesses" pronounced in the Bible depend upon this one. Thus he learns of Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption. 1 Cor. 1, 30. Thus his happiness is ultimately in God; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8, 31; 15, 13.

V. 2b. Hence the lover of God's Word meditates in His Word day and night; in all his waking hours his thoughts are occupied with its teachings and precepts. Ps. 119, 54. 55; for: 2 Tim. 3, 16.

If the queen of Sheba could say to Solomon of the men at his court: 2 Chron. 9, 7, surely we, who have the completed revelation of the wisdom of God, are thrice blessed. Come and drink deep from this unfailing fountain of living waters; it will amply and adequately quench your thirst after righteousness. Matt. 5, 6.

2.

But not only the source of our happiness is of paramount importance, we must also consider whether ours is an enduring, abiding joy. If it were only of short duration, we would do well to consider whether we should choose it or not. Let us see what our psalm says.

a. V. 3a. The lover of God's Word "shall be like a tree," etc. A most beautiful simile. What sublime poetry! Same with elaboration. Jer. 17, 8. Many trees outlive the man who planted them. But here the point of comparison is the fruit-tree, bringing forth its fruit in due season, etc. Its opposite the barren fruit-tree. Luke 13, 6—9. The heart of the lover of God's Word is rooted in the Word of God, the water of life nourishing the roots (cf. Jer. 17, 13: "the Lord, the Fountain of living waters"). This water of life nourishes him, strengthens him, and enables him to bring forth good works.

b. V. 3b. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Is this really true, or is this beautiful poetry and nothing more? It is not fiction, but solid fact, just as real as that fruit-tree planted by the streams of water, and true in as much higher a degree as the Christian is worth more than a fruit-tree because of his immortal soul.

But it is a promise almost too sweeping, too good to believe, you say, and experience seems to contradict it. Does the Bible teach this elsewhere, that all the lover of God's Word does shall prosper, shall succeed? "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Ps. 23, 6; Rom. 8, 28.

No matter what betides (persecution for righteousness' sake, Matt. 5, 11, 12, the martyrs in the arena, f. i., tortured and tormented, calmly recited the 23d Psalm; sorrow, Matt. 5, 4; Rom. 8, 35—39), the lover of God's Word is blessed, is happy in his mind and heart. Jas. 1, 2. A question of faith.

c. But after all, this promise of prosperity might be restricted to the temporal life of the righteous man. Does this blessedness end with the death of the lover of God's Word? What of the world to come? As for the ungodly, the wicked, we are told, they "are not so," not like a well-planted, well-watered tree, but "like chaff, which the wind driveth away." They have absolutely no stability, and their happiness, such as it is, is of short duration. At best we might imagine it to extend over this present life.

Fleeting is the worldling's pleasure,
All his vaunted pomp and show.

But the godly, the lovers of God's Word, shall stand even in the Judgment. Yes, this terrible word "judgment" is found even in the First Psalm; but the "blessed" of the first verse is not affected by it; for while the way of the ungodly will perish (v. 6), the godly man's way will not, but he will "stand in the judgment," i. e., he will come forth victorious from the trial of the Judge of all the earth; for "blessed are all they that put their trust [take refuge, believe] in Him." Ps. 2, 12. The lover of God's Word shall stand in the congregation of the righteous at the right hand of the Judge; for he was a member of the invisible Church, the "holy Christian Church, the communion of saints," here in this life. And as heaven and earth shall pass away, while Christ's words shall not pass away, so the joy of the lover of God's Word shall not pass away at the Judgment, for it is derived from the Law of the Lord. John 12, 48.

V. 6: "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." John 10, 14, 27. Also the believer knows this; hence he is firm in his hope of everlasting life. John 10, 28, 29. Verily,

Solid joys and lasting "pleasure" (or treasure)
None but Zion's children know.

Conclusion.—Thus in the very first psalm we are confronted with the issues of life and death. The same solemn seriousness, which confronts us in the whole Bible. But two kinds of men: happy and unhappy, blessed and cursed; but two ways: the way of a sinner who is unrepentant and scoffing and that of the sinner repentant, converted, and thus a saint in Christ Jesus, desirous to

please God; but two states after Judgment: eternal perdition or perfect, unalloyed blessedness. — A choice must be made. May we all be lovers of God's life-giving Word and finally meet with all the blessed saints in the land of tearless joy!

Concordia, Mo.

O. W. WISMAR.

Literatur.

Im Verlag des *Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.*, ist erschienen:
Synodalbericht des Oregon- und Washington-Distrikts der Missourisynode.
 1924. Preis: 20 Cts.

Ein äußerst wichtiges Referat D. Piepers über den Unionismus ist in diesem Bericht abgedruckt. Gerade in diesem Stück bedürfen wir immer wieder der Stärkung. Ich bitte jeden Pastor, dies Referat zu lesen.

Proceedings of the Colorado District of the Missouri Synod. 1924.
 Price, 34 cts.

This report contains two good doctrinal papers, one on "Church Discipline" (essayist: Rev. O. Heerwagen), and the other on "Die seligmachende Gnade Gottes" (essayist: Rev. Th. Hoyer). A.

American Lutheran Publicity Bureau Calendar. Published by the
 American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 69 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y.

A very attractive calendar, with striking sayings and with information on the activities of the Publicity Bureau. Pastors who did not receive a copy will be furnished one if they apply to the above address. A.

The Great Commission. By *Rev. Paul Lindemann.*

Send Me! A Worker's Manual for the Systematic Mission Endeavor of the Walther League and Similar Organizations. By *Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., D. D.* Order from Walther League Headquarters, 6438 Eggleston Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Both above pamphlets were prepared at the request of the Systematic Mission Endeavor Committee of the Walther League. The names of the authors promise material which is inspirational and helpful, and the reader will not be disappointed in his expectations. The titles describe quite accurately the contents of the pamphlets. The cost of each is 15 cts. If ordered in larger quantities, the price is \$1.20 a dozen. — May God bless these pamphlets as they seek to awaken in us, and especially in our young people, a sense of our missionary obligations and give practical hints as to how these obligations may be met! A.

Der Verlag des *Schriftenvereins* (E. Klärner), Zwickau, Sachsen, hat folgende Sachen erscheinen lassen:

1. **Die geistliche und selige Freiheit eines Christenmenschen.** Der Brief an die Galater, ausgelegt von D. E. M. Born. Preis: 40 Cts.

Dies ist eine köstliche Gabe für Prediger, Lehrer und Laien. Das kleine Werk ist ganz und gar populär gehalten, beruht aber auf eingehendem Studium, und auch ein Theolog wird mit Nutzen diese Erklärung des Galaterbriefs, gerade auch die der schwierigen Partien, deren dieser Brief bekanntlich mehrere enthält, lesen.

2. **Die Internationale Vereinigung Ernster Bibelforscher** (Russellites). Von *Heinrich Stallmann*, Pastor in Berlin. Preis: 6 Cts.

Ein wertvoller Traktat zur Bekämpfung einer Sekte, die auch uns mancherorts Not macht.

3. Was hast du mit deinen Sonntagen gemacht? Zweite Auflage. Preis: 2 Cts.

Ein Schriftchen mit der unserer Zeit so nötigen Mahnung, den Feiertag recht zu heiligen.

4. Unentbehrlich für jedermann. Preis: 2 Cts.

Ein ernster Ruf zur Buße.

A.

Macmillan Company, New York, N. Y.: —

An Introduction to the New Testament. By *B. W. Bacon, D. D.*

This is one of the volumes in the New Testament Handbooks Series edited by Shailer Mathews. It was originally issued in 1900. Since then it has been reprinted four times. In spite of its appearance twenty-four years ago, which accounts for its silence on the rather numerous recent developments in the field of New Testament study, the book is valuable. Dr. Bacon is Professor of New Testament Exegesis in Yale Divinity School and gives ample evidence of scholarship and learning in this book. It is hardly necessary to say that he belongs to the class of liberal theologians, and that Lutheran pastors will find many statements in this work to which they cannot subscribe.

The Imitation of Christ. By *Thomas à Kempis.* Edited with Introduction and Notes by *Brother Leo, F. C. S.*

A beautiful and convenient new edition in English of this famous product of pre-Reformation mysticism. Our readers are aware of the fact that the work, while it has merits which have given it great popularity, fails to teach the cardinal doctrine of justification by grace through faith.

The Gospel at Corinth. By *Richard Roberts, D. D.* Price, \$1.75.

This book contains seventeen sermons preached on First Corinthians. It is brilliant, but its teaching is quite far removed from the Pauline doctrines of redemption and justification, not to speak of other faults.

The History of Religion in the United States. By *Prof. Henry K. Rowe.* Price, \$1.75.

Prof. Rowe did not intend to write a history of the Christian Church in America, but rather to give an interpretation of the various religious movements that have given shape to the religious life in our country; hence he offers more general observations than specific facts. The only prominent Lutheran whom I find mentioned is Muehlenberg. His book is interesting and helpful because of its historical content. Its doctrinal point of view seems to be that of the liberal theologians.

Christ the Truth. By *William Temple, M. A., D. Litt.* Price, \$2.50.

This book has been declared to be "far and away the ablest scholarly presentation of the arguments for orthodox theology that has appeared for many a year." But, alas! I find that the author takes evolution for granted and declares the story of the fall of man in Gen. 3 to be a "myth." A number of other points could be mentioned, in which he departs from the sound doctrine of Holy Scriptures; hence the "orthodoxy" which he defends can be called such in a relative sense only. But one is grateful to see that Dr. Temple believes the accounts of the miracles of Jesus and accepts the doctrines of the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, and the Trinity, and that he rejects the *kenosis*. The author attempts to give the Christian religion a philosophic basis — an undertaking which is always hazardous and usually leads to disaster. The present venture is no exception. But the work is a profound production, closely reasoned, abounding in references to Plato and other philosophers, and affording stimulating mental exercise to all theologians.

A.